



As a Veterans Affairs Mental Health Professional,
I help Veterans make
the most of life.

Discover Mental Health Care Careers at VA.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Why VA?

The **best care** starts with the **best opportunities.**

More than a century ago, President Lincoln made a promise to America's servicemen and women, pledging the care and concern of a grateful Nation for the sacrifices they made to preserve freedom. Since 1930, the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been to keep that promise.

Today, Department of Veterans Affairs has grown into one of the largest, most technologically advanced health care systems in the Nation. Our employees are proud to work in the largest health care network in the country. VA operates more than 153 medical centers, 909 ambulatory and community-based outpatient clinics, 135 nursing homes, 206 Veterans centers, 24 military discharge centers and a number of other facilities across the country.

At VA we strive to provide a professional, supportive environment where our patients, and you, can thrive.



The best **careers.**

At VA, mental health professionals are core members of the interdisciplinary care team, working with primary care and other health care professionals in an effort to provide the best, most comprehensive care possible. The goal is to foster an integrated, collaborative environment where innovation is encouraged. VA offers a wide variety of mental health careers, including:

PSYCHIATRY

VA offers psychiatrists the opportunity to deliver clinical care leadership across a continuum of mental health venues and to practice state-of-the-art psychiatry without insurance constraints. As many of our facilities are part of a university affiliation, our psychiatrists often engage in teaching and research. Additionally, VA offers psychiatrists exciting, challenging professional opportunities to provide innovative and effective treatments to Veterans.

PSYCHOLOGY

VA views psychology as a respected discipline, and we value our psychologists as part of both the interdisciplinary care teams and the medical center leadership. As such, we offer VA psychologists an unparalleled variety of practice opportunities. You can take on a leadership role, work in management, research, academia, training, or even impact system-wide policies. You also have the opportunity to practice in several specialized areas, including PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and serious mental illness. Plus, you'll experience a career where the focus is on hope and resilience, and on enabling Veterans to maximize their personal potential.



SOCIAL WORK

VA offers social workers a world of opportunities that aren't available in other organizations. Here, you'll assume roles that are often handled by other health care professionals in the private sector. As a VA social worker, you may have the opportunity to provide direct clinical services and coordinate special interest programs, all while working with the interdisciplinary care team to deliver care in the best interests of the patient.

PSYCHIATRIC NURSING

The psychiatric nursing field at VA encompasses registered nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs), as well as nurse practitioners and clinical nurse specialists. As a national leader in trauma treatment, VA gives psychiatric nurses the opportunity to work in specialized practice areas, including serious mental illness, PTSD, and traumatic brain injuries. Our psychiatric nurses are key members of the interdisciplinary care team, working to ensure patients are receiving the best care possible. They also have the opportunity to participate in national policy and decision-making, research, and education.

Additionally, many APNs serve as primary care providers with the principal responsibility of ensuring that patients receive the appropriate mental health screenings and that proper follow-up occurs. Our APNs may also provide critical psychiatric treatments, including medication and other services.



The best **opportunities.**

Veterans' mental health is a top priority at VA. After transitioning from military service, many Veterans face challenges in adjusting to civilian life. VA's focus on effective mental health services allows providers to play a critical role in working with Veterans to reclaim their lives.

VA supports this mission by ensuring that our mental health professionals have the most innovative technologies, facilities, and training at their fingertips. When you join VA, you will be a core member of our interdisciplinary care team structure, collaborating with both primary care and other mental health professionals to establish the right course of treatment for patients.

EVIDENCE-BASED CARE

VA employs evidence-based mental health practices throughout the system. As part of this effort, VA is in the process of providing system-wide clinical training to VA mental health staff in the delivery of state-of-the-art mental health services.

FOCUS ON CARE, NOT INSURANCE

All too often, mental health care is contingent on the patient's insurance policy. But at VA, mental health care is not a business decision. A career with VA allows you to break free of the restrictions of managed care and practice the way you were trained.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

VA is a national leader in technological innovation, and innovation is at the core of mental health care delivery throughout the VA health care system. Examples of VA's mental health innovations include the integration of mental health services into primary care settings and the widespread availability of tele-mental health services.

EMPHASIS ON RECOVERY

VA is a leader in treating several of today's most urgent mental health issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), serious mental illness, and substance use disorders. At VA's medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics, our emphasis is on recovery. It is VA's mission to help Veterans recover from mental illness and allow our Nation's heroes to live their lives to their fullest potential.

Did you know **that VA:**

- Conducted the largest-ever clinical trial of the effectiveness of psychotherapy in treating PTSD
- Employs a nationwide electronic medical records system that virtually eliminates errors
- Is the largest employer of social workers, as well as of Master's of Social Work (MSW) degree holders in the world
- Doesn't require patients to present proof of medical insurance, and provides care based on patient need, and not by managed care policies
- Serves a population of more than 7.8 million Veterans
- Provides in-patient care to about 600,000 Veterans and manages more than 57 million outpatient visits each year
- Has facilities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories
- Provides medical care backup to military hospitals during national emergencies
- Operates command centers to coordinate services through the National Disaster Medical Service during major disasters
- VA's system includes a wide spectrum of mental health services for Veterans, including integrating mental health services into primary care and aiding psychosocial rehabilitation
- VA hospitals scored higher than private facilities on the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index, for the sixth year in a row



Mobility is just one of the advantages of working for VA. We offer employment opportunities from coast to coast and beyond. So, whether you enjoy living beachside, in a bustling metropolis or in the serene countryside, there's likely a VA facility nearby.

Better benefits. The best care.

VA's mission is to provide the best possible care for America's Veterans. In return for helping us achieve this goal, we offer our employees a superior work/life balance, flexible schedules, competitive salaries, and a robust Federal benefits package and a retirement plan. Why? Because we believe when you provide the best care, you deserve the best benefits.

LEAVE AND HOLIDAYS

- Depending on their specialties, VA mental health professionals earn 13-26 days of paid annual (vacation/personal) leave each year and may accumulate up to 85 days
- Annual leave begins to accrue immediately and can be used as it is earned, with supervisory approval
- Mental health professionals earn 13 days of sick leave each year with no limit on accumulation
- There are 10 paid Federal holidays
- The Family and Medical Leave Act and the Family Friendly Leave Act allow employees to take reasonable amounts of leave for medical reasons, for the birth or adoption/foster care of a child, and for the care of a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health problem
- The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program allows other Federal employees to donate annual leave for a medical emergency of an employee or family member
- Military leave is authorized up to 15 days a year for active reservists and National Guard members



HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE

- VA offers a wide variety of health insurance plans including dental and vision, with the ability to change plans yearly, with premiums partially paid by the Federal Government
- VA employees may use Flexible Spending Accounts, which allow you to set aside tax-free dollars to pay for medical, dental, and vision care expenses that are not reimbursed by your health insurance plan
- Term life insurance, family, and additional coverage options are available with the cost shared by the Federal Government
- Optional long-term care insurance is available

MOBILITY AND LICENSURE

VA has health care facilities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Should a mental health professional desire to relocate, he or she may seek employment at any location where there is a vacancy and, if hired, transfer without loss of benefits. Only one active, unrestricted state license is needed to practice in a VA facility in the above locations.

RETIREMENT

VA mental health care employees are covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). FERS is a three-tier retirement plan composed of Social Security benefits, FERS basic benefits, and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). Similar to the 401(k) savings plans widely available in the private sector, the TSP allows employees to tax defer up to a fixed dollar amount of their income each year, subject to the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service. The Federal Government also provides a basic contribution and matching based on employee contribution. For retired military personnel, these benefits are in addition to full monthly retirement pay or pension. Retirement health care insurance is also available.

LIABILITY PROTECTION

As Federal employees, VA mental health care professionals are protected by the Federal Government in instances of alleged malpractice or negligence resulting from the performance of their duties in or for the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The United States Government accepts responsibility and liability for its employees' negligent or wrongful acts or omissions during the exercise of their official duties. This applies when employees' actions are in accordance with the policies of the institution in which they are practicing.

AWARDS AND HONORS

VA bestows both monetary and honorary recognition for superior performance, along with awards for special or unique achievements.

EDUCATION

VA recognizes the importance of professional education. To that end, mental health professionals may be eligible for our continuing education support programs. These programs are designed to help VA mental health professionals enhance their practical knowledge in an effort to better care for our patients. Our education support programs include:

- Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP)
- Student residency programs
- Tuition support programs
- Employee continuing education tuition programs
- Advanced training programs

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- Free parking at most facilities
- Smoke-free and drug-free workplace
- Child care at some facilities
- Uniform allowance
- Employee associations
- Annual physical examination
- Employee wellness programs
- Fitness centers at some facilities
- Compensation for job-related illness and injury
- Credit unions
- Dining facilities and retail store
- Public transit subsidies at some facilities



Hiring Policies

QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum qualifications for appointment as a VA mental health professional are:

- U.S. citizenship (non-citizens may be hired on a temporary basis when qualified citizens are not available)
- Current, full, active, and unrestricted license to practice in a State, Commonwealth, or Territory (e.g., Puerto Rico) of the United States, and in the District of Columbia
- Successful professional record
- Personal interview
- Satisfactory physical examination (may include drug screening)
- Background examination
- English language proficiency

PSYCHIATRISTS

- Must possess a doctor of medicine degree or equivalent resulting from a course of education in medicine or osteopathic medicine obtained from an accredited school
- Must have obtained certification from an American Specialty Board, completion of an accredited residency in the primary specialty area, and publication of articles in nationally recognized professional journals to qualify for Chief grade

PSYCHOLOGISTS

- Must possess a doctoral degree in psychology from a psychology graduate program accredited by the American Psychological Association (APA)
- Applicant's specialty must be consistent with the specialty required by the position to which he or she is applying
- Must have successfully completed an APA-accredited, professional psychology internship training program

SOCIAL WORKERS

- Must possess a Master's of Social Work (MSW) from a school of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education
- Must be licensed or certified at the master's level to independently practice social work within three years of the date of employment

PSYCHIATRIC NURSES

- RNs must hold an associate, bachelors, or master's degree from a school of professional nursing approved by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) or the Commission on Collegiate Nurse Education (CCNE)
- APN Licensure:
 - Nurse practitioners must be recognized by their state of licensure as both an RN and an ARNP
 - Nurse practitioners must be certified as an APRN by the American Nurses Association or another national certifying organization as a condition of employment and function in the role
 - Individuals appointed or moved to VHA nurse practitioner nurse positions must possess a master's degree from a program accredited by the NLNAC or the CCNE
 - Clinical nurse specialists must possess a master's degree from an academic program accredited by the NLNAC or CCNE, with a major in the clinical nursing specialty to which the nurse is to be assigned
 - At a minimum, clinical nurse specialists must possess an RN license

LICENSED MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPISTS

- Must hold a master's degree in marriage and family therapy from a program approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE)
- Have graduated from a nationally accredited program conferring a comparable mental health degree as specified in the qualification standards of those disciplines (Social Work, Psychiatric Nursing, Psychology and Psychiatry)
- A doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy from a COAMFTE approved program is considered to be a comparable mental health degree
- Hold a full, current and unrestricted license to independently practice marriage and family therapy in any state
- May have the licensure requirement waived if they are otherwise qualified and awaiting pending completion of state prerequisites for licensure examinations for a period not to exceed two years from the date of employment

LICENSED PROFESSIONAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELORS

- Must hold a master's degree in mental health counseling, or a related field, from a program accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)
- However, a doctoral degree in mental health counseling may not be substituted for the master's degree in mental health counseling

- Hold a full, current and unrestricted license to independently practice mental health counseling, which includes diagnosis and treatment
- Non-licensed LPMHCs who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements may be given a temporary appointment as a graduate LPMHC under the authority of 38 U.S.C. 7405(c)(2)(B)
- Entry level LPC (GS-9) may have the licensure requirement waived for a period not to exceed two years for a LPMHC that provides care under the supervision of a licensed LPMHC at or above the full performance level

PEER SPECIALISTS

- Must be successfully dealing with a mental health and /or co-occurring condition
- Must be trained and certified to help others with these conditions, as well as identify and achieve specific life and recovery goals
- Must be actively engaged in his/her own recovery for a period of at least one year
- Must volunteer or be hired to provide peer support services to others engaged in mental health treatment

SALARY INFORMATION

- VA mental health professionals are compensated according to a Locality Pay System (LPS), which varies according to facility location
- The LPS ensures that all mental health professionals are paid competitive rates within each local labor market
- Pay is reviewed periodically to ensure competitiveness with salary rates in the local community
- VA offers premium pay for overtime, on-call, weekend, and holiday duty
- Accelerated increases within each grade may be awarded for length of service, enhanced qualifications or assignment, specialized skills, professional achievements, or high levels of performance
- Cash bonuses may be authorized for certification, exceptional job performance, or exemplary job achievement



VA is revolutionizing mental health recruitment, and we want you to be a part of our groundbreaking efforts. Join VA to explore a number of employment opportunities that match your training. So, whether you're a confirmed urbanite, fond of the beach, or in search of peaceful Midwestern landscapes, you can explore VA mental health care opportunities.

For more information, call the Human Resources Management Office at your local VA health care facility, call **1-800-949-0002** or visit **VApacementservice@va.gov** to learn more.

How to Apply:

VAcareers.va.gov

To learn more about mental health career opportunities or how to apply for a position, contact the local recruiter or Human Resources Management Office at the VA facility where you desire employment, as hiring decisions are made locally.

Veteran employment information can also be obtained by contacting

VApacementservice@va.gov

The toll-free number is **1-800-949-0002**.

Employment information and job applications can also be found on the Internet at

VAcareers.va.gov

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